

I thank my colleagues on the Maricopa County Board of Supervisors for electing me 2006 Chairman. Their support and leadership are crucial to managing the fourth most populous county in the nation.

Our county mission is to provide responsible leadership so our residents can enjoy living in a healthy and safe community. With that as a guide, I have established priorities for my chairmanship in the upcoming year. I will focus my efforts on three areas that I feel will have the greatest impact: Health, Public Safety and Criminal Justice, and Fiscal Responsibility through property tax rate reduction.

Health

Many of you have noted the abundant high pollution advisories. The Board of Supervisors' commitment to solving this problem is evidenced in the resources we have devoted to air quality. Last year, we created the Maricopa County Air Quality Department. This Board has increased the number of air quality inspectors working in the field to ensure construction sites, industrial operations, and residents alike follow the letter of the law. In 2006, our Air Quality Department will focus on public and business education.

Air is our most important natural resource, and we at the County want to continue to set the example in the community. I would ask our County Administration to adopt a work flex schedule, including telecommuting where possible, for all county employees.

Public Safety and the Criminal Justice System

One of the major goals in the coming year is to evaluate and fund streamlined justice system programs which reduce our jail population and delay the need to build additional detention facilities, thereby saving hundreds of millions of dollars. In addition, the mentally ill, the homeless and the drug addicted can receive assistance.

- The Human Services Campus for the homeless opened a few months ago and serves as a national model.
- This past year, I established The Seriously Mentally Ill (SMI) Commission to work toward diverting the mentally ill from jails and into treatment programs.
- Rampant Methamphetamine use requires education to increase awareness and prevent the spread of this drug abuse.
- Mental Health Court, Alpha drug treatment program and Teen Court are three programs that are successful in terms of results and efficient criminal justice funding.

Fiscal Responsibility

Maricopa County is recognized nationally as one of the best-managed counties in the country. One of the hallmarks of our success has been our fiscally conservative approach to solving community issues and funding our mandated services. We are serious about getting results for the money we spend and keeping our taxes as low as possible.

Property values have increased phenomenally in the last year and people are worried the big increase in their property values will result in a big property tax increase. The Board of Supervisors is also the Board of Directors for the Library and Flood Control Districts, and they set those Districts' tax rates. Our Board voted to set a self-imposed limit on Library and Flood Control property taxes that will reduce these Districts' tax rates to offset the big increases in assessed values.

It has been my honor to serve Maricopa County as a Supervisor for almost twelve years, so far. As Chairman for the year ahead, I look forward to working toward improving the quality of life for all of us.